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Extremists of Right, Left Are Kin in Fantasies, but Not in Finances

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Excerpts from an address by
Alan Cranston, state controller of
California.

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — One morning, not too long ago, two bulky pieces of mail landed on my desk in Sacramento.

The first envelope contained a copy of Progressive Labor, a monthly published by the extremely left wing Progressive Labor party.

The magazine told me that we Americans live in a fascist state, that President Johnson and Walter Reuther are among its conspiratorial leaders and stooges, and that President Kennedy was assassinated by the big business, police state machine.

It said that all America would know this, if the press were not controlled.

The second envelope contained a packet of material published by the extremely right wing John Birch society.

This material told me that we Americans live in a Communist state, that President Johnson and Walter Reuther are among its conspiratorial leaders and stooges, and that President Kennedy was assassinated by the Communists, for not being a good enough Communist.

It said that all America would know this, if the press were not controlled.

Notion of Conspiracy

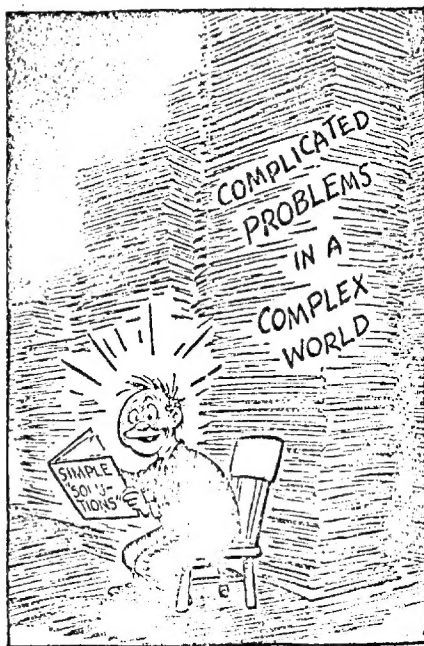
An extremist is, I think, basically and above all a zealous believer in a fanciful notion that an evil conspiracy controls or is close to controlling our land—our government, our press, our schools, our churches; indeed, almost every aspect of our lives.

To take some further examples from the hard right:

To the followers of Carl McIntire of the far right, our churches are Communist dominated, the press is "leftist and Vatican controlled," ad infinitum.

To the followers of Dan Smoot, civil defense programing is "planned dictatorship," urban renewal a plot toward a "Soviet America," and so on and so on.

To the followers of Gerald L. K. Smith of the Christian Nationalist Crusade, the Supreme Court, the income tax and the United Nations are only a few of the tools of the Kremlin.



—Minneapolis Star

"This is easier to understand—
it's all just a plot!"

To the followers of the White Citizens Councils, mental health programs, the Ford Foundation and civil rights laws, among a good deal else, are all Communist cabals.

To the followers of the Minutemen, everything from Martin Luther King to Life, Look and the Saturday Evening Post is part of the great conspiracy.

To the followers of H. L. Hunt's Life Line Foundation, America's mutual security program was devised by no less than Joseph Stalin — in the 1920's—and Life Lines goes on in a very big way from there.

And to the followers of Robert Welch and the John Birch Society, the CIA, NATO and de Gaulle are just three of thousands of Communist schemes and schemers.

Reds Poor by Contrast

The evidence indicates that more than 3,000 such groups in America are now doing a 30 million dollar a year business in right wing extremism.

For comparative purposes, government sponsored groups, such as the Communist party, at its peak, never got much further than raising one million

dollars a year, in the United States.

And the Progressive Labor party, the most vociferous and potentially contagious new voice on the hard left these days with its Peking brand of radicalism, has an estimated 500 members, with a treasury, perhaps, commensurate with its size.

In contrast, the Birch society alone spent an estimated three million dollars last year and now is aiming at adding 38,000 new members, just in California. Its leader, Robert Welch, deems the soil of California so fertile that he plans to spend half his time among us.

The point is not to belittle the Communist party or other extreme left wing splinter groups in America, as long as their support depends, in varying degrees, upon a treacherous element not present in the extreme right wing: Allegiance or subservience to a foreign power.

Not Real Conservatives

In a strange way, this element is at one and the same time a source of strength and a cause of weakness for the extremists of the left. Their relationship to the Soviet Union and/or China, automatically directs a great deal of unsympathetic attention to their activities. The absence of any such alien and hostile ties on the part of the extremists of the right causes a comparative lack of concern about their doings.

The point is, I think, that inside America and within the fabric of our own society, the extreme right has by far the more power, prestige and potential to become a force, rather than a factor, in our land.

But all of this vast propaganda activity, though worthy of our deep concern, is not, to me, the most immediate, serious danger.

I have confidence that the great majority of Americans have the innate good sense to reject flatly the patent silliness from the screwball set, right or left.

One very real danger, I believe, is this:

An extremist believes and practices the philosophy that the ends justify the means.

From hounding librarians and teachers, to bullying editors and public officials, to boycotting businesses and infiltrating organizations, to break-

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ing up meetings, and training in the hills, to the extremist this is simply patriotism of the highest order—well meant, but deadly dangerous.

Another fundamental characteristic of the extremists is their loss of faith, if they ever had it, in the institutions of our nation and in our democratic processes. They are not legitimate conservatives or liberals in any sense. They can never be. They are prepared to operate wholly outside the bounds of our American tradition.

Genuine conservatives and genuine liberals believe in honest debate over the many sides of an issue and are then willing to leave the decision to the will of the majority—and this is the very essence of our democracy.

Dangerously Wrong

But to the extremist, there is no other side. There is nothing to debate. There can be no compromise.

I believe that Americans must be ceaselessly alerted to hate, wherever it appears, and shown again and again and again why it is so dangerously ominous—and so dangerously wrong.

The good people of this nation and state—and they form the multitude—must act and speak out against the evils of extremism.

Each of us must express our faith in our society through words and work—in our news media, businesses, clubs; in our neighborhoods, communities and cities; in all the channels of communications and influence within the structure of our society and our government.

More of us need to speak out, with positive active faith in ourselves and our nation. Silence is not golden, my friends. Silence is darkness. In the darkness, the extremist contrives to tarnish this Golden state. And then bend it to his perverted will.

Truth, faith and the clear voices of good men of many persuasions will spotlight the extremists of the right and left, and reveal them as they really are—feeble and fearful, holding only the weapon of fear and the weapon of hate.

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